

Linda Clair
Meditation Retreat
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Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 5B – Wednesday morning discussion session

Question: Yesterday and today I had really intense pain. Yesterday it was in my back and today in my knees. And my whole body was burning. Then it tipped over from being really painful. I don't know whether it was an energy – the intelligence of my body taking over. I can still feel my body shaking. But it felt quite beautiful as well.

Linda: So did the pain go away?

Question: Yes. Yesterday it was really intense, my body was shaking and then it completely left. Today, I think I wanted it to happen again. It was intense but more in my knees than in my back. It feels beautiful, really painful. My mind was saying, "Move, just move!"

Question: How long did you go on without pain?

Question: Not that long. It felt like the pain was there for a lot longer. It left just before the bell went. So I was thinking, "I hope it (the sit) keeps going," but then the bell went. I guess I have to watch that because I've been working really hard in the morning and then taking it easy in the afternoon. But yes, there was that desire to want more of that.

Linda: Well, it's tricky because of course you want more of that and that's why you're doing this. But you have to be patient as well. That wanting, that longing, is what keeps you going – partly what keeps you going. The suffering also keeps you going because you've got no choice – but that longing for that as well.

But don't go into a sit trying to repeat anything. That's difficult when you've had a session like that and an experience like that that's so beautiful. It gives you that confidence to know, "This is possible in me." So it gives you that but be careful not to try to repeat it. It will come.

Question: Yes. When I open my eyes after there's absolute clarity.

Linda: Yes, and you'll feel more also after the retreat. There will be more.

But yes, it does take effort. And anyone who says it doesn't, doesn't know what they're talking about, really. Eventually it's completely effortless. It's just the natural state. But what you're doing is speeding up bit by bit – speeding up. And when you have those periods where it just goes, the energy in your body and consciousness is faster than the resistance. It's like you're much faster and higher, almost like you're looking down at it.

But you can only sustain periods like that for not very long, to start with. Gradually it increases but you have to not expect that because resistance will be stronger at times as well.

Question: I think it was the absence of thinking about it. There was no commentary about it, which is...

Linda: Is bliss.

Question: It felt like it was momentary but...

Linda: That's really good.

So how are you A.?

Question: Kind of new things are happening for me this retreat. I thought I'd done enough retreats so it would all be the same but it's not. I've been aware for some time that when I sit, my arms are dragging forward. I think that's to relieve the pressure on my bum. So I dropped my shoulders and put them back slightly. I did get intense pain in my buttock but I sat with that. It was amazing that my chest felt lighter. It was worth it to experience that openness. Then the bell went and the pain was a bit less so I'm working with that to see if I can do it a bit more because I think it's a protection mechanism that my arms drag forward. It was intense but yes, it's worth it.

Linda: Do you still feel the residue of the bush-fire experience?

Question: Probably. It was a very frightening experience. When we evacuated to a safer place I didn't feel anything. I guess that was adrenaline keeping me ready to act for the next thing.

Linda: And shock.

Question: Yes, and after a while I felt shaky. It's probably been a good softening process, up in a way, but it is mixed with panic and anxiety.

Linda: Yes, so this is a great thing to do after something like that. You will feel different when you get back, I'd say, maybe more settled, less fear, less anxiety about the whole thing. Now there's a new whole anxiety. (Laughter) The bush fires are forgotten now. (Replaced by the pandemic)

Question: There was a sense, when I had let my chest soften a bit more, even though the pain went to my buttock, there was a gratefulness that I hadn't felt before – just a little bit.

Linda: Good.

Question: I want to tell you about something that happened to me on Monday, during the whole day. During the morning meditation my mind lost all its power; it didn't have any momentum. I could go from my mind to something else, which was something I had never experienced. It was like energy, and was very strong. The mind just couldn't stand up to...

Linda: Reality.

Question. Yes. It was going on all day. I had this idea that it was just a very ordinary thing – the mind itself. But then, all my activities during the day were also very ordinary. Things I look forward to like tea or lunch didn't have any excitement or anything to look forward to.

Linda: Did that bother you?

Question: No, it was okay. But at the moment I feel my mind in the last sitting has come back with a vengeance. When I realised I wanted to talk to you about it, it's been coming on very strong.

Linda: That experience sounds beautiful, amazing. And that's how it is. Everything is just ordinary and the mind, you realise, is just this fairly pathetic entity that is trying to control everything you do. You start to see, really, it's all bluff. It's not real at all, and it can't exist with anything real, in now.

So that will happen again but, as I was saying to S., the mind will come back with a vengeance at times and go, "How much do you want this? You think you've got me, but not really – I'll come back." So the thing to do is just to stay at it, not expecting to repeat what happened on Monday, but it will happen. It's not that you've lost it. It's just that your mind has regrouped and you're probably a bit tired from that experience too and it's trying to take control again. So don't fight it. Just try and stay as steady as you can with it. Keep breathing. Keep stable and solid. And try not to be scared that it's going to take over completely again because it can't take over completely once you've seen it to that degree like you saw it on Monday.

Question: It feels like it has at the moment.

Linda: It feels like it has but it hasn't. It's all a bluff. All of it is a bluff to try and get you scared and to try and get you to give up. It will do that every step of the way. So you need to regroup yourself, but not fight it. But really watch your fear rather than the mind's – what you see as – strength because it's a false strength. It's not real. What you've got to do is look at your reaction; this fear that you feel and maybe disappointment and disillusionment.

Question: I don't feel disappointment. I think what happened was a good eye-opener. Something I've been looking for.

Linda: And it's different to how you think it's going to be. So just keep going without expecting anything, with as little intention as possible. Just stay as stable as possible. Have good solid sits. Get up and do the walking. And if you need to, talk about it again too. I'll probably ask you a bit later, tomorrow or the next day, how things are going because it's good to express it like this too because it does give it less power when you verbalize what's going on.

Question: It doesn't feel like it.

Linda: No, it doesn't feel like it. But it's also a shock when that happens; a different sort of shock.

Question: It was very nice but unexpected. I couldn't quite understand a lot of it because the energy that was there, which wasn't the mind, I can't work it out at all.

Linda: So don't try and work it out. Don't try and work anything out. Just keep sitting and just being here.

Question: It's a pain.

Linda: Yes. But try not to expect anything or assume anything. But know that this is real. This is not just something that I'm talking about, or you're following, or happens to someone else – this can happen to you. And that's part of the shock. Part of you feels this is impossible for me; this can't happen. That's what your mind will play on, this can't be happening in you. So just stay as strong and stable and consistent as you can.

Question: You talk quite often about wanting this more than anything. But I don't want it. I don't feel a strong push, desire for enlightenment. And yet here I am again.

Linda: Yes, and it's a big thing for you to fly over from Perth and be here, the whole thing.

Question: Thanks to the support I get to be here, I'm back again. When I'm here I'm onto it, following the breath, coming back from thoughts, all of that. But I still don't have that thirst that you describe.

Linda: Don't worry about that. You do want it. Everyone does. And if everyone knew what it was they'd want it more than anything else in the world. So everyone wants it but very few people realise they want it. And of course you want something because you're here. Otherwise, like you said, you wouldn't bother going through what's involved to get here. So don't worry about that: this longing, this desire, this wanting. Something is bringing you back here again, again, and again. And that's enough. So don't think you should be feeling in any way different to how you are now.

And it's expressed differently in different people. There must be this depth of wanting something, in you. Some people just feel it differently.

Question: I wanted to check in and say that the last two days I hit a wall of resistance like I've never hit before. I was blown away by how intense it was. A lot of energy in my body and pain moving around my body, and coming back to the breath amidst all of that. Not much thinking but a huge amount of physical activity, and sensation going on. I was exhausted by it. I had to go lie down every single break to get to the next session. It was quite overwhelming but also I didn't feel my determination waiver.

Linda: So how do you feel now?

Question: The pain is still there but not as intensely. I feel a lot of energy. It feels caught in my thinking body.

Linda: It's probably partly the shock of walking into it and being a little bit out of sync with the whole thing. It was probably a shock.

Question: The first day I felt wrought into sitting and being here... Yesterday morning it really hit hard.

Linda: You're just catching up and condensing three days into two. I'd say it'll start to settle down a bit after the last couple of days. So just keep going and rest, like you said. When you're resting just rest. Just eat, meditate, lie down.

Question: That feels like the best thing to be doing: the lying down.

Linda: Yes, I find that during a retreat, as it goes on, I feel less and less like doing much walking or physical stuff. So yes, just listen to your body, do that. Try not to be surprised by the resistance; it's going to happen – just deal with it and keep sitting as you're doing.

Question: It's great to be here too.

Linda: Yes, it is. It's probably the most sane place in the world at the moment.

Question: I've had more pain than I've ever experienced, in a different way. This morning I very nearly threw up. It's my first experience of total nausea. And then that thing where your mouth fills with saliva and you're about to go and my head went straight down... the first sit this morning. Last

night my body felt rigid in different places. The next sit I went rigid again and felt like my body was twisting and tipping and putting a lot of stress on the other side so it was incredibly painful. It's carried on doing that.

Linda: Well, you're going to the back soon, so that will settle it down. (Laughing.) It will give you a break.

Question: Is it sitting so close to you that makes it so much more.

Linda: Probably, a combination; that would probably be part of it.

When you feel that nauseous, rather than going, "Oh, I'm going to be sick! I'm going to be sick," do the opposite – breathe into it and get as close to it as you can because it's just – I say just but it feels very real – it's intense fear and you're just feeling it physically. So breathe into it; challenge it, rather than, "Oh no, I'm going to throw up!"

I'm glad you didn't! (Laughing) The thing is, I don't think I've ever seen anyone actually thrown up yet. A lot of people are on the verge but nobody has ever thrown up.

It's very tricky to do but go to it and breathe into it. Feel it even more rather than this trying to get away from it and the fear of it. If you do that it won't happen in the same way again. You'll get residual stuff coming up where you do feel a bit nauseous but usually it will go through very quickly. And you'll see more clearly what it is, which is layers of fear. And the other stuff, again just feel it. Watch your fear about it. Stuff like that happens – strange energetic stuff.

Question: Last night my face contorted on its own. The whole of one side of my face went upward and the other side came downward. I was so glad it was dark. (Laughing) And the feeling that I can't move – once my body is contracted I feel that I shouldn't correct it. But it's intensely painful to stay leaning and twisted.

Linda: I would say if you can straighten up, straighten up. Just gently straighten up if you're aware that you're twisted.

Question: I want to hear from you more about that. I had an experience while I was sitting in front of you. It was nothing great like a glimpse. I was having some emotional reactions – I hate this person, or this or that happens. Then I had a visual of charcoal chicken and I went, "Oh, I want tandoori chicken!" (Laughter) In the middle of that whole, big, emotional reaction – all shaky and I don't know where my breath was – I had the realisation that mind is just a frame-by-frame, linear movie. And I felt there is no need for me to take it that seriously because I heard you say that it's just a bluff. And even if I have a strong emotional reaction to something, like a visual of meatballs, why am I taking it seriously. Yes, there is work involved. I'm following the whole thing and letting go, and letting thoughts go, and watching the emotional reaction. I was watching that a lot and my chest cleared up. Things are happening. They became subtle. I want you to speak a bit more on the nature of mind and when you say mind is a bluff. Also, I feel I'm really pushing myself and maybe I'm arrogant but I don't understand when you say be humble or let it humble you. I have a lot of gratitude. But I don't want to be arrogant.

Linda: When you say letting go, what are you actually doing?

Question: I'm being confident that, "I *will* meditate. I *will* be bringing myself back."

Linda: So you do bring your attention back to your breath? Is that what you mean about letting go?

Question: I'm not holding here. I'd rather say, "Ah, get into thinking if you want to," and then I wait and see the emotional reaction which is generally in my chest but now I'm getting it in my head and in my belly – it's changing. And then I bring it back to the belly.

Linda: Well, I would say just bring it straight back. You're complicating it a bit. And what you'd rather do is not really relevant – leave it. That's what your mind would rather do. It would rather complicate everything and make it as difficult and complicated and serious as possible. This is doing the opposite – this is simplifying it. So as soon as you have that, don't bother analysing it. It doesn't matter.

And the emotions – you're just going to feel it. It doesn't really matter what you're thinking about or feeling – like hating someone. That's just a way of getting you emotional. See it, realise you've been lost in it or caught up, and you come back to your body, primarily down here. Particularly not up there unless you have some very strong sensation happening up there anyway and then you can't help but feel it up there. But use this as an anchor and just come back here.

Keep it as simple as possible. It's a very simple, practical thing – too simple for the mind. Most people want to complicate it going, "There must be a different way. If I do this and this and this it'll sort things out and I'll understand what's happening and it will make it easier." You can't understand it – you just can't. And you can't play around with it too much. You can experiment to a degree with sensation but really, keep it as direct and simple.

Question: But you said to watch the emotional reactions to the thought.

Linda: You see it and come back to the breath. You don't get into it and start analysing it and go, "What is this emotional reaction? Why do I hate this person? Why am I in this?" Just see it and come back. See it as quickly as you can. Spend as little time in it as you can and as soon as you see it, you've seen it, then come back to your body just to ground yourself again, to remind yourself where you are, which is here in your body. You're not in the past dealing with someone at work who you hate, and going through some sort of past experience. You're not there.

You're here and that's what this is all about – proving to yourself that whatever time it is, wherever I am, I'm here in my body. It's not the past. It's not the future. It doesn't matter if it's one o'clock in the afternoon or two o'clock in the morning – it's still now. It's not the past or the future.

But the mind will keep trying to suck you into thinking that you're living in the past and that there's more security in thinking than in actually being here, whereas there's no security in thinking at all. You think if you think about something, prepare for something, you're going to be more prepared and it will be easier when you're actually doing it. But most of the time not. Unless it's something practical like learning to drive, or something like that, and even then that is a more body-based thing than a theoretical thing.

There's this deep fear that if I don't think, I'll die. The mind will die – that's what the fear is about. But this, now will never die. And that's what you want, something that's never going to die, that's always here. So that's your only security, realising this is now. And when I die, it is going to be now. Once you accept that you stop trying to pretend that time exists – because it doesn't – and that's what thinking is all about.

Question: Can you talk about the difference between arrogance and being humble?

Linda: You go between the two as you're doing this. I know I did, where you think, "I'm going really well! I'm almost here," and then suddenly something will happen that will knock you down, like D. was describing (mind coming back with a vengeance.) It humbles you but you also need to have the strength to get up and keep going.

You'll get knocked down again and again and again until you're just lying on the floor begging to be free – you'll do anything for it. That's what humility is. Arrogance is thinking you're somewhere that you're not. Arrogance is thinking, really.